

2/15

*** DRAFT ***

Proposal for Lower Manhattan Environmental Task Force

The Mayor has asked that OEM spearhead a task force of agencies with expertise on environmental, health, and safety matters to build confidence and to coordinate public information efforts about the status of Lower Manhattan.

Broad Proposal

The public will be most reassured when the City speaks with one voice about conditions in lower Manhattan. A false perception exists that the City is not doing much on environmental matters there. OEM will lead a task force of City agencies involved with the various aspects of WTC recovery/rebuilding efforts, along the lines of the task forces for West Nile Virus Prevention/Control and the Rodent Control.

Focus/Mission

This task force would primarily focus on environmental and health issues. Related lower Manhattan matters would be referred to Andy Salkin (construction/utility/street activities) and to Josh Sirefman (economic development activities) as appropriate.

The mission of the task force would be to actively, rather than defensively

- coordinate lower Manhattan environmental and health activities among relevant agencies
- disseminate a consistent message in various forums to City agencies, other governmental entities, the press, and the public
- quickly establish a hotline for all lower Manhattan environmental and health matters
- serve as a clearinghouse for environmental monitoring data and share it with the public in terms understandable to a lay person
- determine how best to refute misleading data from EPA scientist
- serve as a liaison with state and federal agencies and elected officials
- inform the deputy mayors of critical issues and decisions

Public Face of the Task Force

A primary goal of this effort is to reassure residents, business owners, and workers that it is safe to live and work downtown, that the City has done appropriate testing/inspecting/enforcing, and that we are aware of the activities of other governmental entities and are working with them. It seems therefore appropriate that our Deputy Mayor for Economic Development should be the face of this confidence-building initiative.

- Kickoff event with the Mayor, Sen. Clinton, D/M Doctoroff
- Follow-up pronouncements from D/M Doctoroff
- Call upon commissioners of OEM, Health, DEP as necessary

Funding Options

The initiative and the hotline should be implemented and announced quickly. Following are options to consider for overall funding:

- Christie Todd Whitman sent Senator Clinton a memo indicating that \$2.7 billion in CDBG funds was available to assist with recovery/cleanup efforts.
- Approach Virginia Fields, Jerry Nadler, Alan Gerson and other members of the "Ground Zero" Task Force to contribute funds to the retaining of an independent environmental consultant to address constituent concerns in lower Manhattan.
- FEMA reimbursement?
- Lower Manhattan Development Corp funds?
- Available City funds?

Major proposed activities

- **Hotline**
Establish a hotline to provide information to residents, businesses, visitors, parents, etc. on issues listed above. Feature all agencies' environmental testing results (such as daily DEP asbestos update, EPA, ATSDR, NIOSH data); interpret these results; and provide links to other testing information. Five people each from DEP and DOH could serve as staff, and additional computer/database staff would be necessary as well. A website and a storefront office should be established as well. Maximum expected volume is approximately 100 calls per day, based on calls to DEP-HELP on the air quality issue.
- **Public information campaign**
Hire an environmental/community outreach consultant to develop materials, staff hotline, etc. Involve CAU. Produce high quality pamphlets, maps, graphics to showcase the City's efforts. Promote the efforts the City has already undertaken – there has been an extraordinary level of cooperation between many governmental entities throughout this process.
- **Digitize DEP sampling results**
DEP has information on over 100,000 samples taken by contractors in private buildings. Organize, digitize, and share this info to reassure the public (check with DEP legal on this.) Develop database to provide information on timing and results of testing at given addresses south of Chambers. Hotline operators could provide this information.
- **Enforcement authority**
Determine agencies' (DEP, DOH, HPD, DOB) enforcement authority regarding testing and cleaning dust. Decide upon enforcement efforts and document them. (Promotion of this must be balanced with desire not to discourage business and investment in the area.) (Discuss with HPD as well.) Check on regulatory authority of DEP. Can dust be declared a nuisance?
- **Air quality ombudsman**
Hire consultant to act as an ombudsman/advocate for the public with the City, attend community board meetings, assist the community in interpreting data, etc. OEM reports that the City had Lehman Associates do this on the lead paint issue, and it worked well.
- **Refute EPA rogue scientist's assertion that air quality is a problem**
An EPA scientist in Washington, Cate Jenkins, has circulated a number of memos on EPA letterhead disputing EPA's air quality assurances. EPA has to date not refuted her allegations, but we understand they intend to do so in the near future and plan to announce an EPA task force next week.. The City should consider asking a blue ribbon panel of health

experts (from NYU, Mount Sinai) to look at data and comment on it and on the City's efforts.

- Make available a list of certified or approved cleaning contractors.
- Recommend legislative initiatives, if necessary.
- Work (cautiously) with EPA on an indoor air quality task force.

Expertise required, as necessary:

- Board of Ed (schools)
- DCAS (find space for drop-in center/storefront)
- DCP (plans for the site's future)
- DDC (worker safety, utilities, contractors)
- DEP (air and water quality, hazardous materials, infrastructure)
- DOB
- DOH (air quality, public health)
- DOITT (mapping and electronic dissemination of info)
- DOS (Fresh Kills)
- DOT (transportation effects and changes)
- EDC (economic development issues, assistance to businesses)
- FDNY (?)
- HPD (residential buildings)
- Law Department (legal issues)
- Mayor's Office Community Assistance Unit (community outreach)
- Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination (environmental review, interagency support)
- Mayor's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (liaison to Sen. Clinton, EPA, City Council, etc.)
- Mayor's Office of Operations (?)
- Mayor's Press office (Press/public communication)
- NYPD (?)
- OMB (budget for task force activities)
- OEM (Overall coordination, FEMA reimbursement)

- Private utilities – (will be driving much of the reconstruction work)
- State DOT (control 9A/West Street)
- Port Authority
- MTA
- Battery Park City Authority